

THE PASTOR'S PARTING BLESSING

NO. 988

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."
Romans 16:24.

THE Christian is someone of generous actions but his wishes go far beyond his deeds; where he cannot be beneficent he is benevolent; if he cannot actually accomplish good for all, he anxiously desires it; if it is not in his power to confer grace upon any, yet he prays that God would give His divine grace to all the brotherhood. His heart entertains thousands, though his house might overflow with ten. His generous desires feed nations, even though his purse is so scant that he cannot afford more than a penny for a poor child. God, whose providence limits our ability, has set no measure to our *willingness*; our wishes may be boundless though our powers are contracted, and this will be good for ourselves and not useless to others.

Christianity never came into the world to make individual professors of it isolated—like the icebergs which float away on the wide sea in solitary terribleness; neither is it intended that we should be so anxious for our own salvation as to be indifferent to the welfare of others. True religion is not a separating and repelling force, but rather, like attraction, it draws individual atoms into one body, and holds them together; it does not split into fragments, but welds into one; it is a loadstone, not a whirlwind! God in His grace gathers together in one body in Christ Jesus all His scattered ones, and the same Spirit who compels us to love God leads us to love our brother, also.

A loving spirit, when it can actually do no more, naturally seizes upon the always open outlet of good wishes, benedictions, and intercessions; thus the great heart of the apostle relieved itself; though he would have been willing to lay down his life for the brethren, yet he did not think it idle to give them his blessing, nor did they reject it as worthless because it cost him nothing. It was meet that he who had in so many ways proved his sincere love to the saints, should in his letter give utterance to it by pronouncing inspired blessings upon them, and thus wrote the apostle of the Gentiles to those he longed to serve, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

We have dropped, to a great extent, the custom of having the benediction pronounced by the minister upon the people. The minister, as a rule, rather turns it into a prayer than pronounces it as his own personal blessing. I am not certain that it is a great improvement, but the dread of anything like priest-craft has led us to this custom. It may be, however, that in avoiding an evil, we have missed a good. Are benedictions sinful or vain; are the blessings of good men of no value; can we no more say, "peace be to this house," and hope that our peace shall rest upon it? May not Jacob nowadays bless the two sons of a beloved Joseph? Will it be a mere form if an Isaac should invoke a blessing on his descendants, or a departing servant of God, like Moses, pronounce a benediction on his people? I confess I would not treat lightly my father's blessing, or the benediction of my mother, and though neither father nor mother can, by their mere wish, confer anything upon us, yet who would wish them to depart this life without having bequeathed us the legacy of their blessing? Like Joseph, you may bring your lads to receive their grandfather's blessing if the old man is yet alive—nor need you suspect yourself of being superstitious.

Many there are who have had no other heritage than a father's blessing, and have counted themselves rich because of it! Now, if the blessing of a natural father and mother may be considered valuable without attributing too much to men, I think so may the blessing of those spiritual parents who have been made useful to our souls. I was reading in the life of Caesar Malan an incident which touched my heart, and I feel no scruple in quoting it in this connection. In traveling through one of the valleys of Switzerland he met with a woman who told him that her father was dying, but that he was comforted and cheered by reading a little book. Being unknown by anyone in the village, Malan stepped into the room, and sat by the dying man's bed, and was delighted to find that the book which had led to the man's conversion was written by him. His son, who was his companion, thus describes the scene—"The old

man exclaimed, 'Ah, had I not been aged and infirm, I should long ago have gone there to see the good Mr. Malan. Look here, sir, you cannot think how earnestly I have entreated the Lord that I might see him before I died; for a long time I thought He would grant my desire, but I'm afraid I shall have to give it up.' "I stole a glance at my father, who was sitting silently looking at his hands. 'What is the name of the book you refer to?' he suddenly inquired as he raised his head. 'Stay,' was the reply, 'here it is, it's always by me,' and he drew from under his pillow a well-worn copy of one of the earliest editions of my father's hymns, and handed it to my father. 'Do you sing any of these, then?' asked my father as he turned over the leaves. 'Oh, Jeannette knows some of them; and she often sings them to me, and I derive pleasure and profit whenever I hear them,' adding, as though speaking to himself, 'If I could only see the dear gentleman who wrote those beautiful hymns; he must be a good Christian.' 'Listen, brother,' said my father, 'this young gentleman and I have just come from Geneva.' 'You have come from Geneva? Then perhaps you have seen Mr. Malan?' 'Certainly, I have. We all know him well, and I can assure you that if he were here he would remind you that he has only been a feeble and imperfect instrument of good to you, and he would speak to you, above all, not of himself, a poor sinner as you are, but of the eternal grace and perfection of our blessed Lord.' "The conversation lasted a few moments longer. My father prayed. Then, when we had sung together one of the hymns which Jeannette knew, he prepared to leave, telling her that he was to preach the next day, Sunday, at Motiers. When he had got to the door, however, he stopped. And returning once more to the bed where the old man was lying with folded hands, said to him with emotion, 'My Father, God Himself, to whom you will so soon depart, has granted your prayer; I am Malan of Geneva, your brother in the faith of the blessed Savior.' "The poor old man fixed his streaming eyes upon him in a long and ardent gaze, and slowly raising his trembling hands, exclaimed, 'Bless me, bless me before I die! You, whom I have so long prayed God to send to me, bless me now that I have had the joy of seeing you.' falling on his knees at the bedside, my father replied, in tones which betrayed his deep feeling, 'You ought rather to bless me, for you are old enough to be my father; but all blessing comes from God alone. Let us once more ask it of Him together.' And folding in his arms the lowly brother, whom he felt he should never see again till they met in the better country, my father invoked upon him, 'the peace which Jesus gives,' and we left the hamlet."

I am ready to confess that there are those to whom I look with the same respect; without the slightest worship of men or care about mental attainments, or mere office; I recognize those from whom I would gladly receive a blessing. Priest-craft assumes to be the divinely appointed channel of communicating with heaven, and this monstrous presence is so abominable that we would sooner have the curse than the blessing of a man hardened to such lies! But men who live near to God and have power with Him in prayer, do, without assuming it, become by their prayers and fervent wishes the means of procuring many blessings for those whom they bear upon their hearts. I have even now ringing in my ears, the fervent benediction of a venerable minister whose daily prayers for me, and reading of my sermons, compelled him to make a considerable journey that he might in person pronounce a blessing upon my head. Job thought it no little thing that the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him or that when the eyes saw him, they blessed him. Good men, in their benedictions, are moved to give us something more than words—for they mean what they say, and they appeal to heaven to make true their wishes, and their wishes, being prayers minted in another form, become current coin of the realm, and greatly enrich us, for they bear the approving stamp of heaven upon them.

I look upon the apostle's words, though they are venerable with years, as dropping heaven's own dew upon us tonight! I hear their mellow tones ringing all along the centuries, and scattering blessings right through the ages! Their music is not silent, nor is it impotent at this hour—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *you* all" is Paul's present and always new blessing. He being dead yet speaks, and his Lord yet hears his holy prayer! Long has the benediction lain in the epistle like the wheat in the Egyptian catacomb, but there is vitality in it yet! Lo, it buds and brings forth good to us after the lapse of 18 centuries! May every one of us feel unction from the Lord attending these words; may the apostle bless us now, yes, better the apostle and High Priest of our profession pronounce anew this benediction over us!

Let us now analyze the text itself. The first thing we will speak upon is this—*what is meant by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ?* Secondly, *with whom is it to be?*—the apostle says, “Be with you all.” And thirdly, *and what will be the effect if it being with us all?*

I. Let us first inquire WHAT IS THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHICH THE APOSTLE WOULD HAVE TO BE WITH US ALL? He repeats the expression verbatim in his epistles to the Corinthians, and to the Philippians, and also in his second letter to the Thessalonians. He closes each of these epistles with precisely the same benediction; therefore he felt it to be fitting and weighty. Does he mean by this, “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” *the grace which was revealed in Christ the Savior?* That grace of God which shone in the gift of a Savior to the sons of men? That grace which was displayed in the coming of Christ to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? Does he mean that which was manifest in the whole life of Christ on earth, was revealed especially in the death of Christ, and which is still to be seen since His resurrection and ascension in His intercession, and in His standing as our representative before the Father’s throne? Grace was gloriously revealed in the person of Christ when He became the incarnate God, and none can consider Him as uniting in one person God and man without discerning much love, and perceiving that it was meant to make way for still more clear displays of mercy. Does not the benediction desire for us a part in the blessing which lies couched in the Messiah’s person, in whom all nations are blessed?

Does the apostle mean *the grace which comes to us through Christ* as well as that which is shown to us *in Christ*? Our Lord, as it were, took out of the riverbed of grace the great rock which blocked up the water courses, and now along the wide and open channel—

*“Immortal joys come streaming down,
Joys like His griefs, immense, unknown.”*

Christ did not create the Father’s love to us—the elect were loved of God before all worlds, and Christ is the *gift* of that love, not the *cause* of it. Calvary did not procure the Father’s love to us, but the love of God towards us could not, by reason of our sins, and the penalty due, come to us so as to be enjoyed by us; it could not bring to us the blessings which we now possess until Jesus had finished transgression, and made an end of sin. Both the grace implied in the sending of the Messiah, and the grace which flows to us through Him, are here intended.

Does the apostle also mean *the grace which comes to us WITH Christ?*—by which I mean those peculiar blessings which come to souls who abide in Christ, who commune with Him, walk with Him, work for Him, and are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. They are not only saved, but something more; they are not drowning men barely landed on the shore, and hardly possessed of life; they have life abundantly; they walk in the light of God’s countenance, and go from strength to strength. If so, there is an exquisite sweetness of meaning in his benediction; may it be richly fulfilled in each of us; may our union to Jesus be so clearly apprehended that we may experience no stinted measure of vital energy, but rather may be filled with all the fullness of God. Surely Paul means nothing less than this!

But he intended more, for his is no stingy invocation. Grace *in* Christ, grace *through* Christ, and grace *with* Christ—put these together, and even then you have not grasped the whole of it! He desires for us *all the grace that is in anyway connected with Christ*, for you will have remarked that in the close of the second of Corinthians, where he gives the same benediction, he extends it, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, *and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit* be with you all.” Here he gives it the shorter form, but he, doubtless, intended it to comprehend all the rest. He really wishes that the one comprehensive blessing of the divine unity—even all the triple blessing of the sacred Trinity—may abide with all those who by faith were one with Christ, and therefore were beloved of the apostolic soul. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” then includes all the grace secured to us in the everlasting covenant. In many of his epistles the apostle sums up with a shorter word than our text, and yet in some respects a fuller one, “*grace be with you all.*” You have this in Colossians, in the first epistle to Timothy, in Titus, and in Hebrews. He says, “Grace be with you all,” without mentioning any person of the Godhead. So that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” is synonymous with grace as such, and comprehends all the various displays of grace which in other passages of Scripture referred to the various persons of the Godhead. He wishes the saints all the grace they need, all the grace they can

desire, all the grace the Infinite God can give. How truly do I echo his great prayer that all grace may be with you all!

Coming more closely to particulars, when it is the desire of our heart that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you all, we mean, first, *may the love of Jesus Christ be with you, and may you know that you have it*. May it be so with you that you may distinctly and beyond all doubt know that Jesus loves you, and the fact being ascertained, may you drink deep into the fullness of its meaning. May you be ravished with the assurance that the ever-blessed Son of God has set His affection upon you, has loved you from before the foundation of the world, loves you now even as the Father loves Him, and will love you when heaven and earth shall, like a scroll, be rolled up, and like an outworn vesture be put away. O that you all might be in such a condition that the love of Christ might shine full into your souls—a noon-tide without a solitary cloud, a summer without a single blight. May you know for sure, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, that you have passed from death unto life, and that the love of God is shed abroad within your souls! What a happy church would it be were all the members in such a condition; but, alas, we see one fearful, another doubting, and a third declining; here is one living at a distance from Christ, and another saying, “O that I knew where I might find Him!” May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sense of a conscious enjoyment of His love be the habitual possession of your heart and mind.

Paul intends also as much as this—*may the mercy as well as the love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!* May that mercy be shown to you by the full pardon of all your sins, and your knowledge that they are pardoned. May your conscience be purged from dead works, and not merely cleansed, but cleansed so that you may know it to be clean; the great mercy is to have no suspicion that sin is left upon you, but to be certain that every transgression of every sort has been forever put away through the precious blood which cleanses from all sin. Alas, there are many Christians who, even in their prayers, do not appear to understand or distinguish between themselves and the unconverted. I believe it to be our duty to ask for God's pardon every day. Our Lord in the model prayer teaches us to say, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.” But we should not confuse that petition of a child to its father, with the first supplication for pardon which befitted us as aliens before we were brought near. As guilty sinners we stood before the Judge, but now we are no longer criminals, for there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. We need not say with Peter in his enthusiastic folly, “Wash not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head,” for the Master tells us that we have been washed and are clean and therefore we need only to wash our feet, for we are, in Him, clean every whit. May you not, therefore, come before Him with what is too often used as a mere parrot cry, “Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.” If you believers are miserable sinners, you ought not to be; you are sinners, but you ought not to be miserable. You have been forgiven; you are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. Is all this nothing? How can you ignore it and still speak of yourself as you would have spoken before you were saved? Is the Lord's pardon nothing that you still complain of being condemned? Do you despise the divine forgiveness? You are a child of God, and do you still use the language of a slave, and feel no liberty in your soul? I fear that what is imagined to be humility is a mangle-mangle of hypocrisy and unbelief! If you are saved, it is sheer cant to call yourself a miserable sinner! You ought to be one of the happiest of beings, and rejoice that the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ abides with you!

Furthermore, beloved, *may you constantly be the subjects of Christ's work*; that will give yet another meaning to this benediction. The Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, is daily carrying on in believers a purifying work, for He sits as a refiner, and He purifies the sons of Levi; He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. Let us pray that however trying it may be to us, and whatever rough providences it may involve, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us all in this respect. May our prayer be, “Refining fire, go through my heart!” Let the winnowing fan be used; let our chaff be driven away—there is not a particle of it we would wish to retain. We desire to be sanctified—spirit, soul, and body, through Him who leads His people outside the camp that they may be separated unto Him. May we walk in the light of God as He is in the light, and so have fellowship one with another, and may the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanse us from all sin.

May the benediction rest upon you also in another manner; may you, brothers and sisters, *be possessors of Christ's peace*. One of the benedictions frequently used by the apostle expressly mentions

peace. "Grace, mercy, and peace be with you." Where Christ is, peace reigns within. He is the peacemaker, yes, peace itself! Conscience is quieted, the heart rests in God, the whole man casts anchor—the boat has reached its haven when it has come to the Well-Beloved. O that you may enjoy this grace of Christ, for it was His prerogative to say, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." It was His delight to pronounce upon His disciples the word, "Peace be unto you." May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. If you are troubled with family concerns, may you roll your burden upon the Lord, and find rest, or if you are vexed about your past transgressions, may you confess the sin unto the Lord and hear His blood speak peace to your soul. Whatever it is that troubles you, may He comfort you, and give you His peace—the deep, unruffled calm which reigns in His own bosom. If there is one gem of grace which, beyond all others, especially belongs to the Lord Jesus, it is the lovely pearl of peace. He is the Lord and giver of peace, the Prince of Peace, and the Messenger of the covenant of peace. Brothers and sisters, may we live in His peace with God, with men, and with ourselves. We all say "Amen" to that prayer!

Would not Paul also desire for us *that we may exhibit in ourselves the grace which shone so brightly in Christ, and was seen by men and angels to the glory of God the Father?* You will never have grace, dear friends, in the same measure as the Lord Jesus had it (rather let me correct myself, for He had grace without measure), but you may receive and exhibit the same grace in your measure. O that you and I may have a high degree of it! Grace displayed itself in the Lord Jesus in a character absolutely perfect, in which not one of the virtues was absent or exaggerated, and in which not a single fault could be found. You can depict the character of John, for a prominent excellence is visible; you can describe the characteristics of Peter; you can give an idea of Paul—for each of these is like a separate gem, and each one has its own special brightness and color; and I may add each one has their own peculiar *flaws!* But when you come to the altogether lovely One, your descriptive powers fail you, for He is like the high priest's breastplate in which all the jewels met in harmony! The excellences of all the excellent are in Him, and none of the flaws; in Him all perfections meet to make up one perfection; all the spices, the myrrh, the aloes, the cassia, the sweet cinnamon, and whatever else may be grateful to God, and to holy men—all these divinely compounded with the art of the apothecary, and well-balanced as to the proportions are to be found in one rare anointing oil upon the person of our Well-Beloved! O may that grace be with you which was poured upon our glorious Head, and continues to distil to the skirts of His priestly garments! May His sacred unction anoint and perfume us all! It was poured on Jesus that it might drop on us; He received this fullness that we might receive out of Him grace for grace. He does not possess grace that He may store it up for Himself, for He needs it not, but He has all fullness in Himself on purpose for us that we may partake of it both now and forever. O that we may manifest it in our lives both public and private, in the emotions of our hearts, and the words of our mouths! May men in all the actions of our lives observe that we are heirs of grace by our gracious conversation, knowing us as a tree is known by its fruit; may this grace be in you, and abound that you may not be barren or unprofitable.

I am far from having brought out all the various shades of meaning which lie within this ancient benediction, for as the Holy Spirit, like the sun, shines on this crystal text, it flashes with all the colors of the rainbow; it is a very full, rich, and large benediction. Even Aaron himself could not pronounce a fuller blessing. The Lord grant it to every one of you, according to the riches of His glory by Christ Jesus!

II. Secondly, WITH WHOM IS THIS GRACE TO BE? "With you all." The apostle meant with all the saints; he did not actually limit it in words to the saints, but he evidently intended to be so understood, for he was writing "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints," and to them he said, "grace be with you all." We will not go beyond the apostolic wish, neither will we stop short of it. This moment I say to you, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *you* all"—with all the members of this church, and all my fellow servants in Christ Jesus. The same grace be with all the churches, with all the chosen of God in every land; but at the present I may be permitted to utter this as my personal and special wish for you, my beloved flock at this time, when for a season I shall be absent from you. The demands of health call me away, and what shall I leave with you, my dear companions, my own children, my reverend elder brothers, my beloved fellow soldiers? What better word shall be the last to

salute your ears from my lips till I return to you? How can my affection frame a fitter utterance than that which fell from Paul's pen, when he added to the apostolic benediction his own personal love, and wrote to the Corinthians, "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you; my love be with you all in Christ Jesus*"?

Now, why with you all? Is it not *because you all need it*? There is not one among you who can do without the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You experienced Christians are greatly in danger when you think your mountain stands firm and will never be moved! You wise and intelligent believers are in sore peril when you dream that you can battle with error apart from your Master! Conscious weakness is our true strength; "When I am weak then am I strong." The boldest, bravest, wisest, most judicious, and most experienced among you need the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and certainly the babes in grace and the weaklings of the flock require it no less. More delightful, still, is it to remember that *you all may have it*! You all, having believed in Jesus, have Him to be your own, and you may surely have His grace; He who gave you Christ has virtually given you all the grace that is in Christ Jesus; indeed, we know from the best authority that grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began!

And, beloved, *there is no grace which you may not have; no grace which you ought to be content to go without*. If a line should be drawn in Christian experience, and a decree should be passed that such-and-such a Christian should never advance beyond that mark, you might feel very unhappy. And yet some of you have drawn such a line for yourselves—and you are *not* unhappy! It is grievous to see how we stunt and dwarf ourselves—and appear to be content with a very poor and feeble form of spiritual life. May the Holy Spirit breathe into your hearts a higher ambition, for rest assured if you do not possess the whole land of Canaan, it is because you are too idle to drive out the Hivites and Jebusites, for there is not one of all the clans but what you may conquer, though they have chariots of iron! There is not a brook that runs with milk and honey but you may drink of it—if you have but faith and prayer enough to win it for yourselves. He gives more grace—seek to enjoy it!

My dear brethren in office, my esteemed deacons and elders, I pray that you may have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abundantly so that you may walk before us as becomes fathers in Israel, that you may be examples to the flock, that none of the weaker sort may see in you any occasion of stumbling, but much that may lead them forward in the divine life. You who are especially the workers among us, you Sunday school teachers, you who have the conduct of our adult classes, you who preach for the Master in the streets, or go from house to house with your tracts—I pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all! Whatever your form of work may be, it will come to nothing without His grace; but you may have it, and I pray you are not content unless you possess it abundantly.

Among you there are members of the church who are very poor; there are, in proportion, probably poorer among us than in another church of our order and standing. For this I devoutly thank God, for I can hardly conceive a church to be rich in grace which has not in it many of the Lord's poor! And this I pray, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you who are the sons and daughters of poverty, to enable you to be patient, to sanctify your trials, to make your homes bright with the presence of the Lord, and to keep you from envy and murmuring. May your rooms be palaces to you because the King visits you and feasts you with His love!

May that same grace, however, be with the few among us who may be said to be rich—for how much grace do the wealthy require, that they may be kept from the temptations which beset their position, and may be delivered from the cankering influence of riches?

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, my brothers and sisters, that, consecrating your substance habitually to Christ, it may bring with it many comforts to your souls as well as to your bodies. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, dear brothers and sisters who are ripening for heaven; may it be light with you at eventide, and may your rest be glorious! Though near to glory, you know right well that you are still dependent upon grace, and I trust you will abundantly enjoy it. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, young beginners who have just put on the harness; may you live long in the Christian church, and serve your Master well! Amid the temptations of youth, and the trials of manhood, may you stand fast and glorify your Lord!

Some of you are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to keep you strong; if you have trod down strength, and have had the hind's feet with which you have stood upon your high places, may you never lose your position, but maintain your joy!

And as for you who doubt and fear, the timid ones of the flock—may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, too, for He carries the lambs in His bosom, and does gently lead those who are with young. A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench.

While I make the benediction thus as large as the apostle did, let me remind you very affectionately that there *is a limit* to it. He is speaking to the saints, and to none else. Have you noticed the form this benediction takes in the epistle to Philemon, and in the epistle to the Galatians? There the apostle puts it thus, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.” It is only meant, then, for spiritual-minded men and women: for such as have been born-again of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ cannot be with the carnal; He will not give the blessing of His presence to those who mind earthly things; when you have been born-again, you will understand the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but not till then. May that gracious work of regeneration be worked in every soul here! The apostle limits it, again, in his epistle to the Ephesians. He there utters a desire that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with “all them who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.” You cannot expect the blessing of Christ to abide with you if you are hypocritical, or formal, or self-deceived! Sincerity is a necessary index of the grace of Christ being with you! Do you, dear hearer, love Jesus Christ in sincerity? If you do, may His grace be with you!

One other limit the apostle gives. Let me read it to you. I can never read these words either in public or in private without a conscious shudder, but they demand an attentive consideration by us all. You will find them at the close of the first Epistle to the Corinthians: “The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand. If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” What a limitation is this! He pronounces a *solemn curse upon those whom he feels he cannot bless*, because they are so base as not to love the infinitely loving Jesus. “If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord comes,” for that is the meaning of the words, “Anathema Maranatha”—“cursed when the Lord comes” or, “As surely cursed as the Lord comes.” Whoever, then, loves not Christ is cursed! Oh, God, save us all from a curse so well-deserved, for not to love such a generous Savior; not to love One so lovely and so gracious; not to love one who loved His enemies, and laid down His life for sinners, is in itself to be accursed! That spirit is withered already, Savior, that loves You not; to be able to withhold its affections from so lovely an object is, in itself, a doom. God save you from it! May there not be one among you here upon whom that curse may come, but “may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

III. And now as this must serve for my parting word for some little time, let me explain, in the third place, what will be THE RESULT TO YOU IF THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS WITH YOU ALL.

First, there *will be a blessed consequence to you God-ward*. As you have this grace of Christ in you, you will love God better; you will seek His face more often; you will pray with more confidence, and more vehemence. You could not have the grace of Christ without being much in prayer, for this eminently distinguished His character. If you have the grace of Christ, you will walk with God, even as He did. Your communion with the Father will be closer than before; it will be less interrupted; it will become thorough. O that I might see a church made up wholly of saints who live in habitual communion with God! I know it is not so with all in this church; I know there are many out of our four thousand members who walk with God, but I mourn that there are others who follow afar off. May this affectionately-intended remark raise in each heart the personal inquiry, “Lord, is it I?” And if your hearts condemn any of you, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you most effectually that you may amend your ways.

The next beneficial effect *will extend to your fellow church members*. If you have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with you, you will love each other fervently with a pure heart; you will have compassion, one towards another. No one will seek his own, but every man his brother's or sister's benefit. Suspicion, harsh judgment, envy, and jealousy will cease; gossiping and foolish talking will come to an end. Alas, how much these things abound, and what sorrow they cause! When the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, our speech will be to edification; we shall esteem others better than ourselves; we shall rather see their excellences than their faults, while we shall each strive which can be of most service to the rest. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell

together in unity!" By this shall all men know that you are Christ's disciples, if you have love, one towards another; may we be mutually enriched in all spiritual gifts and graces by having communion in the grace which is in Christ Jesus! Eighteen years and more have we now dwelt together in union and prosperity, and that this same grace may continue with us through twice another 18 years, if the Lord spares us so long, is my soul's most fervent prayer!

Another admirable result will follow towards *your families and yourselves*. If the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you, you will personally be much the happier; your troubles will sit lightly upon you when grace is fully within you; when they are seasoned with grace, your joys will have a mellow taste in them than now. The family altar will become a reality; the servants will find the house a home, and the children will become children of God when the master and mistress are filled with the grace of our Lord Jesus. Gracious men are a sure blessing to the neighborhoods in which they live; the sweet perfume of their family piety will blow out at the doors and windows, and spread a balmy influence around. As trades of an ill savor make a whole district nauseous, so saints, who have the sweet savor of Christ in them, render a region fragrant!

Thus a blessing will flow out to *the world* which lies in darkness. If the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us, we shall have all our thoughts and feelings towards sinners materially changed; we shall mourn over them with intense compassion. Parents, you will not be able to look upon your unconverted children as you now do—holy sorrow will mingle with natural pleasure. Ah, he is a fine young man; he is growing up, and is quite his mother's joy. Mother, if his soul is unsaved, do not so much as look at him without a tear. "Ah," says the father, "there is my girl—what a lovely creature she is!" Is she converted? If not, think what a *fallen* creature she is! Employers, if you have divine grace you will not go into your factories as you have done, and think of the "hands," but you will have pity on the "souls" there! Many sensations pass through a man's mind if he stands at a window in Cheapside, and sees the rush of the living river; it strikes me that the flow of our crowded streets is one of the most amazing sights in the whole world. There go the thousands—tramp, tramp, tramp—on, on, on—without a pause! Thoughtful men watch the stream and calculate this and that, according to the manner of statistics, but the right-minded Christian, contemplating the scene, has this consideration uppermost—"All these are immortal; how many, or how few of them, are on the road to bliss, and how many are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath?" Then will he involuntarily breathe the prayer, "Lord, have mercy upon this guilty city! Save the myriads of this modern Nineveh, and let transgressors learn Your ways!" Oh, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ were with us, we would, like the Savior, often burst into tears over London, as He did over Jerusalem! We would not trifle, as we do now, with opportunities of doing good; we would speak to ones and twos if we could reach no more, and Jesus' love would be our theme!

Time compels me to cease, but before I leave you, my beloved flock, I solemnly pronounce this benediction upon you—"The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." And my heart says, Amen, Amen, Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 16.

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